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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001164

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TAGS: PREL PTER PINR MOPS UN KPKO IS LE
SUBJECT: UNSCOL CHIEF OF STAFF UNDERSCORES UNIFIL'S
"STRATEGIC" SUCCESSES

REF: A. BEIRUT 1153
 1B. BEIRUT 819
 1C. BEIRUT 1022

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: UNIFIL was not hindered in its investigation of the October 12 Tayr Felsayh incident, UN Special Coordinator on Lebanon (UNSCOL) Chief of Staff Jack Christofides asserted on October 21. He also said that the upcoming UNSCR 1701 report to the UN Security Council would reflect "clear Israeli violations" related to the presence of surveillance equipment and unmanned drones in Lebanese territory. Christofides underscored UNIFIL "strategic" successes and downplayed recent events as "isolated incidents." UNIFIL Commander MG Claudio Graziano would give up command of UNIFIL on January 28, Christofides reported, noting that UNDPKO was seeking additional nominations for the position from the Government of Spain. End Summary.

NO DELAY TO UNIFIL RESPONSE
AT TAYR FELSAYH

12. (C) The UN Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were not hindered in their investigation of the October 12 Tayr Felsayh incident (ref A), Christofides asserted to the Ambassador October 21 in a meeting at UNSCOL headquarters. Christofides was not overly concerned about the delay in a UNIFIL response to initial reports of the incident, concluding that two hours could easily pass while UNIFIL confirmed ambiguous media details, contacted the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), alerted and linked up with LAF patrols, and moved to the suspected location at night. He discounted rumors of an LAF-Hizballah conspiracy to hinder UNIFIL and cited normal situational confusion as the reason for the delay.

ISRAEL IN VIOLATION OF UNSCR 1701

13. (C) Christofides acknowledged that, due to the discovery of Israeli surveillance devices in Lebanese territory on October 18, portions of the draft report on UN Security Council Resolution 1701 to the Security Council would be revised. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' final report on UNSCR 1701 is due to the Security Council November 10; the draft is now in New York. Christofides predicted

that UNSCOL Michael Williams will declare the October 18 presence of Israeli unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) drones over Lebanese territory a violation of UNSCR 1701, a situation aggravated by the UAV continued overflights after UNIFIL requested that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) withdraw the aircraft. Regardless of whether the surveillance devices were implanted prior to, during, or after the 2006 war, their presence and detonation are also clear violations, Christofides asserted. (Note: Williams is in Cairo at present on a round of official meetings with the GOE and Arab League. End Note.)

¶4. (C) Separately, LAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations BG Gen Abdulrahman Chehaitly told the DAO on October 21 that an IDF participant in the Tripartite meeting between the LAF, IDF, and UNIFIL that same day admitted the IDF installed the listening devices. The IDF representative also cautioned that Israel would continue surveilling the area as long as Hizballah exists in the south, Chehaitly reported.

INCIDENTS IN SOUTH NOT
INDICATIVE OF ESCALATION

¶5. (C) Christofides opined that UNSCOL saw the October 12 and 18 events, along with the July 15 arms cache explosion in Khirbet Selim (ref B), as "isolated incidents" not indicative of a pattern of escalating tensions among Hizballah, Israel and the LAF. The overall situation in the south is "more stable," he declared, checking off success stories such as the Tripartite's many dispute resolution efforts, the quick return to calm after the firing of suspected Palestinian

rockets into Israel from the south on September 11 (ref C), the Israeli handover to UNIFIL of cluster bomb strike data, and progress on Israeli acceptance of UNIFIL's plan for Israeli withdraw from northern Ghajar. He underscored that these developments were of "strategic importance" and should not be overshadowed by recent events.

UNSCOL AND LAF
DEVELOP BORDER PLAN

6 (C) Christofides assessed that physical border security was but one part of a comprehensive "border management" requirement. He stipulated the need for the next government to move forward on approving LAF and donor-developed plans to increase the presence and effectiveness of Lebanese security organizations on the border. Income generation schemes to counter smuggling, better customs enforcement, and drug eradication and interdiction programs all played a part in Lebanon's broader border management process, he added. UNSCOL was scheduling a November 4 donor round table discussion in Beirut on plans to seek input before presenting them to the government. GOL buy-in to any plan is central to convincing donor countries to help fund the programs, Christofides insisted.

2010 UNIFIL CHANGE OF COMMAND

¶7. (C) UNIFIL Force Commander MG Claudio Graziano will give up command of UNIFIL on January 28, confirmed Christofides, who predicted that Graziano, with his promotion to lieutenant general, might become deputy chief of staff of the Italian armed forces. Christofides was optimistic that Spain would provide more troops once it officially assumes command of UNIFIL, in order to compensate for the expected departure of over 2000 Italian soldiers. The new Spanish UNIFIL commander was not yet selected, Christofides confirmed, and UNDPKO had requested additional Spanish nominations for the position.
SISON